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RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 6821
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 7313
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 8785
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SUBJECT: PRC HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER: OPTIMISTIC ABOUT CHINA'S
LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC "EVOLUTION"

Classified By: CDA J. P. Zumwalt per (1.4b, d)

1. (C) Chinese lawyer Feng, Zhenghu, the first Shanghai signer of Charter '08, met with Embassy Tokyo in late June. Feng has tried three times to return to China from Japan but has been turned around and sent back to Japan each time. Feng says he believes the initial decision not to allow him to return was probably made by local officials in Shanghai who were angered by his advocacy for citizens trying to fight corruption. Now that the case has become well-known though, he thinks officials higher up must be in agreement to refuse him entry to China.

2. (C) Feng characterized himself as "cheerful but stubborn" and vowed to use legal means to fight what he characterized as the "illegal and unconstitutional" actions of the government to deny a Chinese citizen the right to return home. "I still have a ticket," he said, "and plan to try again on July 2, on Northwest Airlines Flight 0027. I expect there will be many friends who will come to the airport to meet me!" Feng went on to say that foreign governments and the Chinese pro-Democracy migr community don't understand what is happening in China, "they think the democracy movement is dead." In fact, said Feng, "people down to the grassroots level have been seized by the idea that they have legal rights, and that the law is there to protect them." He added, "We don't care if Speaker Pelosi talks about human rights when she visits or not, we are working everyday on our own, to see that our legal rights are respected. We don't call for democracy, but if democracy means participation, than this is democratization."

3. (C) Feng said common people were trying to use the courts for redress, even when they think they don't have a chance to win. "All of this," he pointed, out, "is being covered and discussed on the Internet and government attempts at controlling the discussion there is ineffective." Feng concluded by saying, "I want to return to China, because it is my home, my family is there, and I am optimistic about China's future. I predict great changes in China in the next two or three years. For every lawyer that is arrested or disbarred by the government, 10 more rise to take their place. We are not working for a violent overthrow, we are working for gradual evolution from within."

ZUMWALT